

Join us for Prayerline Bible Study
424-203-8400 – Passcode:648568 then #
Monday Evenings – 6:00 p.m. PST

2010

What Does the Bible Say About Forgiveness?

There is a complete freedom that God has provided for all who believe in Him.

The word freedom means: liberty

The word liberty means: freedom from slavery

God has set us free, but do we walk in that freedom?

The first step that we need to take in order to walk in the freedom that God has provided for us is to accept God's forgiveness. Those of us who are believers, have accepted Jesus as our Savior and our sins have been forgiven. But do we walk in the freedom that God's forgiveness gives to us?

The word "forgive" means: to give up wanting to punish

Guess what, God doesn't forgive the way that we do. When we forgive someone, we still remember what that person did that hurt us or offended us. But when God forgives, he no longer remembers what we did! It's as though whatever we did never happened.

Isaiah 43: 25 - I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

(The Message Bible)

"But I, yes I, am the one who takes care of your sins - that's what I do. I don't keep a list of your sins."

Praise the Lord! He does not keep a list of our sins. He doesn't keep reminding us of what we have done!

1 John 1: 9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

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When we confess our sins to God, He is faithful to forgive us completely! As if we had never done it.

So the first step to walking in the freedom that God has for our lives is to truly accept, not just in our minds, but deep in our hearts, that God has forgiven us. He has given up wanting to punish us. He no longer remembers our sins! It's as if it never even happened. So we have freedom because we know that God doesn't look at us and see our past. When He looks at us He sees our potential, He sees us as who we are going to be when we have those perfect, eternal bodies that he is going to give us. He sees us through the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ covers us.

The second step in walking in freedom is to forgive ourselves.

Romans 8: 1-2

¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

The word condemn means: to declare guilty

When we repent and accept God's forgiveness, we are set free from guilt. We are no longer condemned! We can walk in the freedom of forgiveness. But quite often we feel guilty for the things that we have done. We don't feel free. Why? Because our enemy, Satan, continually throws our sin, continually throws our past in our face. Guilt is not from God. God will convict us of sin, so that we will be motivated to repent and turn away from it. But God does not cause us to feel guilty. He has set us free from guilt and condemnation! When you start to feel guilty for sin that you have already confessed, remember the verse that we just read. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

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Psalm 103: 11-12 -

"¹¹For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

"¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

God has removed our transgressions, our sins from us. They no longer exist in His eyes! So, we do not have to feel guilty for something that no longer exists! We need to accept God's forgiveness and then forgive ourselves, so that we can walk in the freedom that is available to us.

The next step in finding freedom through forgiveness is to forgive others. Carrying unforgiveness in our hearts towards others will prevent us from being able to walk in freedom.

Luke 6: 37 - Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

Ephesians 4: 32 - And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

When we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts towards some else, we are actually being disobedient to God. When we refuse to extend to another person one of the benefits Jesus died to give to us, we put ourselves in a bad place. God has called us to forgive others. When we don't forgive, it keeps us from being forgiven ourselves. It causes us to become bound up in its chains, so we are no longer free. So what can we do?

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We need to release those who have hurt us or offended us. When we do, we set ourselves free from the bondage of the enemy. We need to take any unforgiveness and lay it at the Cross and exchange it for the grace and mercy of God.

So here is how we can walk in freedom through forgiveness. We accept God's forgiveness, we forgive ourselves and we forgive others. Sometimes we have to do these three things on a daily basis or even an hourly basis. But when we do, we will discover true freedom in Christ.

Forgiving Others - Direction from God

Forgiving others may seem to be a choice, and in one sense it is a choice, but God has been very clear about forgiveness. He has given us specific direction in numerous Scriptures, all of which can be summed up in just one word -- forgive! God's Word says, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins"

(**Mark 11:25** - *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*). "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (**Luke 6:37** - *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:*).

God is saying that it is in our own best interest to forgive! He is not talking about what is in the best interest of the person who needs to be forgiven. We are the ones who God is trying to protect. We are the ones who receive the most benefit from forgiveness, not the other person. A spirit of unforgiveness complicates and compromises our daily walk with God. Forgiving others releases us from anger and allows us to receive the healing we need. The whole reason God has given us specific direction is because He does not want anything to stand between us and Him. God's love for us is beyond our comprehension. Forgiving others spares us from the consequences of living out of an unforgiving heart.

Forgiving others does not carry with it a single decision that we need to ponder. God has not qualified one sin as being more grievous to Him than another and He has not qualified one sin committed against us as warranting forgiveness and another not. For example, God is *not* saying, "If a person lies to you or steals from you, you should forgive him, but if they abuse you or harm your child, you can hold them in unforgiveness." He is saying to forgive everyone, always, and do it immediately.

Forgiving Others - A Personal Story

Forgiving others often takes time. Amy was no longer living with her alcoholic and abusive husband Tim, but she had not been able to forgive him for the 32 years of abuse that she had experienced. She knew she should forgive him, but she could

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not bring herself to do it. She did not feel he deserved her forgiveness. This went on for several years until one day in a counseling session with Amy, I asked her to listen with her heart and be open to anything the Lord might say to her. During that quiet time, the Lord helped Amy see that He loved Tim, while disapproving of Tim's actions. The Lord made it clear to Amy that the abuse was not her fault. As she looked up from her quiet posture, she related how all of the reasons why she should not forgive were no longer valid. I asked if she was ready to forgive and she said yes.

Amy's recognition that the Lord truly loved Tim, while disapproving his actions, caused her to have a change of heart. When she made the choice to forgive Tim, the feelings that had been compromising her life-anger, resentment, fear, misunderstanding, and confusion-left her heart. Forgiving Tim brought peace to Amy's heart.

Forgiving Others - The Divine Example

We have a divine example for forgiving others! God knew that man needed forgiveness, so He sent His Son Jesus to deliver all of mankind from the eternal consequences of their sins (**1 John 4:9-10** - *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."*

¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.). Colossians 3:13 - Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. says, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Jesus not only had the power to forgive, but to grant us the ability to forgive others just as we have been forgiven.

Forgiving Others - Personal Action

Forgiving others often starts as a decision of surrender-an act of our will. This surrender invites God to begin working in our lives in a deeper level, allowing God to heal us. Just as with Amy, we can ask God to enlighten us with the understanding that we need to fully forgive from our hearts. We simply need to make the choice to be open to forgiveness and reconciliation.

Remember, forgiveness does not justify the deed or the person, it does not provide God's forgiveness for their actions, because only God can do that. While nothing can undo the past, we can do something about the condition of our own present and future. Forgiving others makes a way for our own healing to begin.

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Prayer For Freedom Through Forgiveness

Father God, I confess to you my sin and I ask you to forgive me. Right now I accept your forgiveness. I thank you that I am forgiven and my sins are remembered no more. Right now I choose to forgive myself for the things that I have done. I am free from guilt and shame. Right now I choose to forgive those who have hurt me or offended me. I walk in the freedom that you have given to me through Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you are willing to forgive, but you are unsure how, consider the prayer below:

Father God, I need your help and your insights. Today I have gained a better understanding of forgiving others and with your help, I fully forgive from my heart. Just as you have freely forgiven me, I forgive them. Father, I ask you to forgive me for hurting others out of my own hurt and to heal my relationships with others. I pray all of this in Jesus' precious name and by whom all forgiveness and healing was made possible. Thank you for loving me in ways I'll never comprehend. In Jesus' name, Amen.